

SEVEN
ENTEN ADDRESSES
ON THE
DYING WORDS OF JESUS.

DELIVERED DURING THE

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS DURING 1882.

1882.

BY
REV. RICHMOND SHREVE, M.A.

MINISTER OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, YARMOUTH, N. S.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.

J. & A. MCNILLAN, 95 PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.

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DELIVERED ON THE
WEDNESDAY EVENINGS DURING LENT,
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BY
REV. RICHMOND SHREVE, M.A.
CURATE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, YARMOUTH, N. S.

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*To the PARISHIONERS OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY
TRINITY, Yarmouth, N. S.*

THESE ADDRESSES are now offered in this form at the request of many among you who heard them.

They were delivered, as you remember, without note or MS., from the Chancel-step; and if, in your recollection, you detect a difference between their present and their spoken expressions, it is doubtless because of the great difficulty of recalling the exact words as uttered.

I trust that neither then nor now has any statement been made contrary to the revealed will of GOD, as interpreted by the Church of England.

RICHMOND SHREVE.

FEAST OF ST. PETER,

June 29th, 1882.

I.
THE INTERCESSION,
AND
THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

It was but a few days ago (Gospel for Quinquagesima Sunday,) that we were reading here how our LORD "took unto Him His disciples,"—apart from the distracting scenes of their busy life to the solitude of companionship with himself,—to tell them of the sufferings which He was so soon to undergo.

We too would hear that voice, and obey its call, during the coming weeks of this Holy Season upon which we have now entered; and would meditate upon those sufferings. Especially will we try to reach something of the meaning of the words He uttered when actually nailed to the cross on Calvary. Now there are three ways at least in which we may regard the Passion of the Saviour.

1. We may think of it as an *Historical* fact, having an effect upon the men and times of His own, and every succeeding age. And whatever be our thoughts from this standpoint, we will acknowledge that it has had a marvellous effect upon the world.

2. Or we may treat of it from its *Doctrinal* side; and this, too, would be full of teaching,—teaching concerning the character of GOD and the nature of Man; or the relative positions of Holiness and Sin.

3. Or we may meditate upon the whole dread subject as *Devotional*, so as to enkindle and quicken our love for Him, and draw our hearts yet more closely to His adorable Person.

You may remember the story of the German nobleman of reckless and sinful life, who was converted at the beginning of this century by seeing a picture of CHRIST, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross, with this legend underneath—

“This have I borne for thee :
What hast thou done for ME ?”

While the Crucifixion must ever remain as a mighty historical fact ; while we cannot altogether shut out its doctrinal aspect at all times ; our chief effort will be to bring it before you with the hope and prayer that our meditations may, by the aid of the Spirit of GOD, reach the heart as well as the understanding.

The Passion of the Saviour, in one sense, lasted all His life-time—

“Scarce entered on this world of woe,
His infant blood began to flow.”

He was “tempted in all points like as we are,” are surely words which have a broader application than that which would confine them to the contest in the wilderness with Satan. And if, in that supreme moment when we are worshipping at the very threshold of Heaven, and our spirits are lifted up beyond the atmosphere of earth, we are taught to say of our sins, “the burden of them is intolerable,” how must His pure soul, which was altogether sinless, have recoiled from the impurity with which, to some extent, He came in contact every day.

But more strictly,—and it is upon this we are to meditate. His Passion began in the garden of Gethsemane the night

before His death,—continued through that night of mock trials,—the morning of fierce scorn and of scourging, and the day of His dying, till “He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.”

Let us try now, by an effort of our minds, to bridge over the two great chasms of time and space, passing over intervening oceans and back through intervening years, and stand before the Cross.

At the moment of which we are speaking, the Garden agony is over; the long night, with its weary hours of suffering and trials, is past; the scourging has taken place; and now, weakened through fasting, depressed with exceeding sorrow, and almost prostrated by loss of blood, JESUS has reached Calvary. Part of the way from the Judgment Hall,—through the streets, and out to the gate of the city, He had borne His own cross (not probably the smooth and carefully chiselled wood with which artists have made us familiar, but a coarse, rough beam); but when He fell beneath its weight outside the walls, it was transferred to other shoulders, and was carried for Him, whether altogether willingly or not we do not know; but JESUS, in His human weakness, accepted the assistance of the strong. And now, that cross is laid flat upon the ground, and He, stripped of His outer garments, is laid upon His back upon it. At each end there is a Roman soldier, to whom a crucifixion was a mere professional duty which did not prevent them from gambling and jesting while the victims were dying, and they roughly seize His hands and feet, and upon each outspread palm, and upon His feet, they place a nail, and then through the shrinking, quivering flesh, they drive them into the wood, until HE is securely fastened to that tree of pain and shame, of death and the curse.

Travellers in different countries have told us of other

crucifixions, and they have told how, at the moment when the nails first pierced the flesh, there burst forth cries and screams from the sufferers, for it was a moment of most terrible agony; and often curses loud and fierce and foul were hurled upon the executioners, while *they* perhaps only jeered. Thus far this Sufferer's conduct had been different from anything these soldiers had ever seen before. All through the hours of suffering and insult, He had been silent; no cry of pain had escaped Him; no look of wrath had kindled in His eye. When He had spoken, it was to the Governor, and then His utterance was calm, and even majestic, and His bearing dignified. Under the soldiers' mockery, His whole mien was that of patient, but heroic submission. Already their coarse admiration for endurance and bravery had engendered a feeling akin to respect, and though, in addition to their own professional careless thought, they had caught something of the spirit animating the crowd of selfish priests and duped people surging round them, yet their admiration was now surprised almost into awe, for at the moment of the entering nails, at the moment of excruciating pain, from Him too there escaped a cry, but it was none that told of His personal suffering, none that cursed his executioners; it was uttered perhaps with no loud voice, but it went up past the angry mob on Calvary,—nor upwards only, but onwards with unceasing echoes still, to sound in the ears of the LORD God of Sabaoth: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

* * * * *

Over on Mount Zion, in the temple court in Jerusalem, there stood an Altar, and day by day for years, morning and evening, there had been offered upon it a lamb which was, by GOD's command, a prophecy and type of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and there each day

as at the temple Altar the lamb's blood was shed, and the smoke of its burning rose upward through the air, the priest would stand, and lifting up his hands would plead with God to accept the offering, and cleanse His people from their sins!

At this moment, when JESUS' arms were stretched upon the cross, and He uttered the first of His "seven words of love," the priest was standing at that altar, and there too the blood of the victim was being shed. But the eyes of GOD are not resting with the old-time exclusive favor upon that scene; for here on Calvary the crisis of GOD's dealings with His creatures has been reached; the one True Sacrifice of the world is being offered, and the blood of JESUS, THE VICTIM, is being shed!

And here too there is a Priest. He is not the Heathen soldier who is in command on that bloody field; He is not one among those priests who in their mad zeal have followed Christ to Calvary, but whose office it nevertheless had been to offer Sacrifices for many a year. He it is Who, in outward shame, is stretched upon the cross. He is "Priest and Victim all in one," and now bearing this people's sins upon His heart; nor only theirs, but the sins of a whole guilty world, He has spread out His already wounded hands before the eternal Throne, and as a Priest, has prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But it was not only for those who were around Him then that these words were uttered; nor only on Calvary that they were spoken. By the unswerving oath of GOD, Christ is "a Priest for ever," and as such has *something* still to offer. Through the open door in Heaven the enraptured saint of the Apocalypse "beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb *as it had been slain.*" And an earlier prophet, if not permitted to see, was yet allowed to hear some of the mysteries of Hea-

ven: "And one shall say unto Him, 'What are these wounds in thine hands?' Then He shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'" "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

When first these words were uttered, men saw Him as He spoke, men heard the prayer as it came from His lips; but it is not so now. Yet, in the Heaven of Heavens, whither He has since ascended, He still makes intercession for those for whom He died; and as the fickle minds of men are swayed by unbelief, as their eyes are half-blinded by prejudice, and they sin against the Truth; when taken captive as by some evil demon, they rush with thoughtless madness into immorality and crime, even then the love of Calvary still lives in that constant heart, and He breathes the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And we thank GOD that we can believe this true. Among us all, there is none that sinneth not. What is the full meaning for ourselves of those words the Apostle wrote, we may be able to conceive, "They crucify to themselves the Son of GOD afresh, and put Him to an open shame;" but whether it can be that Incarnate Love, though now ascended into Heaven, can feel, as the ages pass, the grief and pain of Calvary,—whether our sins can now cause suffering to the heart of JESUS, we cannot know; but we do know that He pleads for sinning souls, "seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

But beside the Intercession of the Priest, we must not forget the value of the example which He set. When others would have cursed and reviled, and cried out against the injustice of their sentence, and the cruelty of the executioners, the Love that forgot Himself, forgot His own pain and injury, breathed out that prayer, "Father, forgive them." We have read an account of a Missionary in India who told

the story of CHRIST's first utterance from the cross to a class of young men, whom he was instructing in the truths of the Gospel, when one of his pupils exclaimed, while the tears started to his eyes, "Oh, how beautiful; how beautiful!" and thenceforth strove to dedicate his life to The Crucified. He was won by the grandeur of a forgiving spirit.

There is a legend of fierce Eastern punishment and revenge, which has been given us in verse by one of the English poets, which tells us how a powerful chief, to punish one who had insulted his honor, bound the offender hand and foot upon the back of a wild, swift steed, which he then lashed into fury, and set free with his helpless load. The poet tells how the wretched man was borne along o'er hill and dale, through flood and wood, with no power to check or guide the animal, until exhausted nature became unconscious of her pain. The story may be used not only as the poet uses it, but also as a symbol of the revengeful man, cherishing his wrath, bound fast by his own desires, and carried away wildly and madly he knows not where, he knows not how far, by his own unforgiving spirit. Yielding to our passions, we become slaves,—not strong and free. It is our ideal of a *man* is one who submits to the power of passion; if, by "men" we mean those who most easily yield to the fierce spirit which sometimes so suddenly seizes us, then surely we are mistaken. It is weakness that is unable to grasp a motive that is sublime; it is not manliness to yield to revenge. It is easy to do wrong; it is sometimes hard to resist the wrong. It is easy to think and speak unkindly; it is hard to forgive. "It is a man's glory," exclaims the wise man, "to pass over a transgression." "To err is human, to forgive divine," is a familiar phrase. It is more Christ-like to forgive; and to approach towards a likeness of Christ is to advance towards all that is manly, good

and true. Take but this single instance from His matchless life: His prayer, as He lay upon the cross, and the nails first pierced His flesh. His cry was one in which the world's prayers are gathered up; it was one which is still ringing in the ears, and echoing in the heart of GOD,—the intercession of the Great Intercessor, the offering of the Great Sacrifice; and at the same time, it was the pleading of most tender pity and of infinite grandeur of soul, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

If we could approach this spirit, at however great a distance, the world would be all the brighter for us, and our own souls would be nearer GOD. A new vision of life, in its blessings as well as its responsibilities, would open before us; selfishness, the very root of sorrow, would be lessened; and increase of strength to forgive would be given with the practice of the habit of forgiveness.

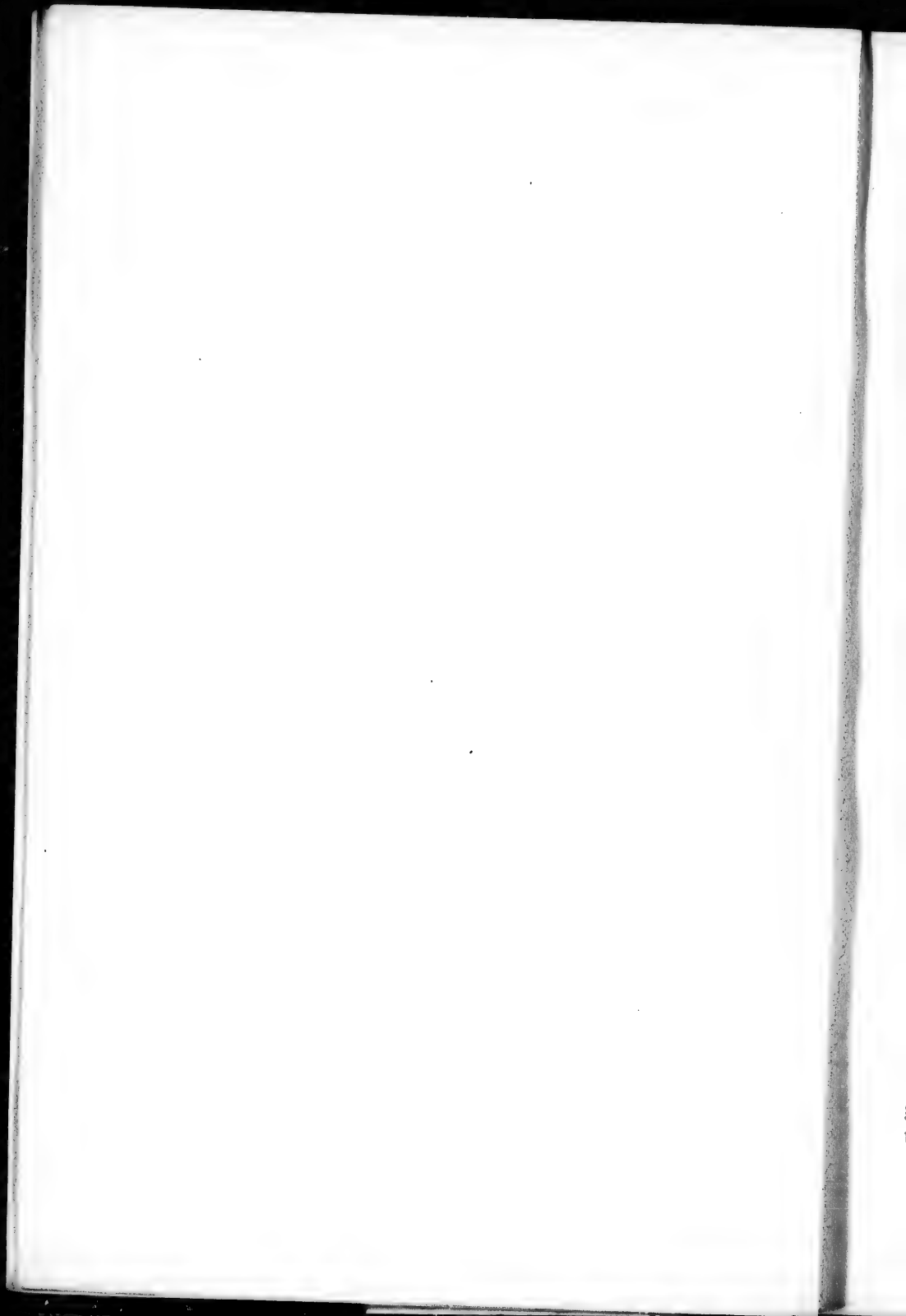
Life, at its longest, is only too short for misunderstandings and quarrels. I have read a simple story of two Christians who quarrelled; for, though they were Christians, the flesh and its passions were yet strong, and not only—as in an earlier instance—was the contention high and sharp and warm, but each felt himself grievously wounded by the conduct of the other. They separated, and all day long they would not yield, though the impropriety of their conduct preyed upon their feelings; but in the evening, when one went to the other's house with the simple words, "The sun is setting," a reconciliation followed. The "sunset of life" comes all too soon for quarrels among Christian men and women. There are hearts, brave hearts and true, and as manly and as womanly as brave, which have within them some chords that would respond in sweet, deep music to the touch of kindly sympathy and love, although the outward appearance seems sometimes so hard and almost stern. It

often seems to me there is a deep pathos in the Apostle's words, "While we have time, let us do good unto all men." "While we have time." Have you ever seen those simple lines which are the pleadings of just such a heart as we have now described?

" * * * * * If I should die to-night,
E'en hearts estranged would turn once more to me,
Recalling other days remorsefully.
The eyes that chill me with averted glance
Would look upon me as of yore, perchance,
And soften in the old familiar way,—
For who would war with dumb, unconscious clay?
So I might rest, forgiven of all, to-night.

Oh, friends, I pray to-night,
Keep not your kisses for my dead, cold brow;
The way is lonely, let me feel them now;
Think gently of me, I am travel-worn,
My faltering feet are pierced with many a thorn:
Forgive, Oh! hearts estranged, forgive, I plead:
When dreamless rest is mine, I shall not need
The tenderness for which I long to-night.

If there be those among us between whom unkindness reigns, let us go meet our former friend with outstretched hand, and smiling face, and kindly words. "Let there be no strife between us, we are brethren." "While we have time." "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."



II.

THE COMPANIONSHIP OF PENITENCE.

"LORD, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

"To-day shalt thou be WITH ME in Paradise."—ST. LUKE, xxiii. 42, 43.

WHEN last we were speaking to you here, the Cross was yet prone upon the ground : It is now to be raised. At the end of the upright beam a deep hole has been dug, and the soldiers now lift the cross with its suffering Burden ; and they lift it, we may be sure, with no gentle care, for to Roman soldiers, inured as they were to scenes of blood, and looking upon the people of a conquered race with genuine scorn, the pain of their victims only gave a thoughtless joy ! And so the cross falls into its socket with a heavy thud, and the weight of the Body, "resting only on Its four great wounds," bears suddenly and with sharp pain upon the nails. Then stones and earth are thrown around the base, each contact with the wood giving agony to the quivering limbs !

But just as the cross is raised, the mocking shouts of the priests and their dupes are for a moment changed to howls of rage, for on the upper end of the beam, as it stretches above His Head, there is nailed a board, whitened with gypsum, on which, in accordance with Roman usage, is daubed in black letters the accusation made against the Crucified. And here it reads in Hebrew, the sacred language of the Jewish race, changed, perhaps, so far into its then form of Aramaic, that all could understand the words,

in the official Latin of the Power that pronounced the sentence of death, and in Greek, which the foreigners could read—"JESUS of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Until now the priests had supposed that by exciting the populace to demand the crucifixion, they had so wrought upon Pilate's fears, that only JESUS was humiliated in the manner of His death, but now they see the stinging insult aimed at them. At once, after a hasty consultation, some of them hurry to the city, and seeking the Governor's presence, beg him to change the "title" on the cross,—to write, not "The King of the Jews," but, "*He said*, I am the King of the Jews." They had forced the crafty but weak-minded Pilate to yield to the popular demand but an hour ago, but now the courage which then had oozed away so completely before an angry mob had settled into sullenness, and with a contemptuous scorn, such as none but a Roman could exhibit, he dismissed them with the curt reply, "What I have written, I have written." It was their first rebuff in their fiendish scheme, since first they had taken active measures to compass JESUS' death; but it was only the first mournful notes of a melancholy dirge which has been sounding on over their nation's buried grandeur ever since. It was as when one throws a stone into the still waters of a lake. The circles widen sometimes, and grow higher and deeper, until they break upon the shore. So with that people, whose ancestors uttered the awful prayer, "His Blood be on us, and on our children." Ever and anon, throughout history, the wrath of men has seemed to be aroused against them, and to sweep over them, not in gentle wavelets, but in fierce, wild storms of persecution. I am not seeking to justify in any way the uprisings against the Jewish race which have taken place, at any period of history; I am but intimating that even man's wrath may serve the purposes of the Provi-

dence of GOD. Not yet is the curse altogether removed from them ; not yet are the storms of human fury stayed ; nor will they be until, like the terrified disciples on the Sea of Galilee, they too, come to JESUS with the cry, " LORD save us, we perish," when once more, as of old, He will calm the storm, and the passions of men will yield, as did the winds and waves, to His " Peace, be still."

* * * * *

But we have spoken of the jeering mob ; of the hardened soldiers ; of the mocking priests : there were others yet, for not one alone, but three crosses are standing now on Calvary, " on either side one, and JESUS in the midst." And we remember now that as the procession left the city, these two were there, bearing in their rough strength their crosses all the way. Their shouts and curses have been loud and foul as they were nailed to the wood, and then were raised up to be gazed at and insulted, to suffer and to die. Their countenances tell of degraded lives, and their " titles " proclaim them " robbers." As once more the crowd shout out in scorn at the silent " King," they too take up the cry, and mock and jeer at Him who hangs between them. But suddenly a recollection comes to one : This was the Prophet whom he had seen one day nigh a year ago, in his native village, doing wonderful works of mercy and of love, as He healed the sick and cured the palsied bodies of this man's own friends. He had heard him too speak words of kindly love so gently, that even then his heart was moved with admiration, and now, as memory recalls that scene, he holds his peace from railing, and even chides his fellow robber on the other side. Instinctively we can hardly help placing this man on the right side of the central cross, because, I suppose, of the partial revelation which is given us of that which is to be in the future. It is just possible he may have

heard those words, as they were uttered, "Father, forgive them." This much he certainly knows,—that while an angry crowd is surging round the place; while men can find no epithet too low and coarse with which to revile the Christ, and no insult too mean with which to express their scorn, the Sufferer Himself is silent; no word of reply, no sound even of pain escapes Him; and as the robber glances at the superscription above *His* head, there flashes upon his soul a revelation which all the learning of the priests had not taught them; and with a pleading look and tone, he prays from his cross to JESUS, "LORD, remember *me* when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And then, the lips which pain and suffering could not unlock, nor insult and mocking unloose, are opened at once at the prayer of the penitent,—though that penitent was a dying robber, and quick there comes the reply, the second utterance from the cross, "To-day shalt thou be *with ME* in Paradise."

My brethren, we might take these words, and reverently tracing, in so far as it has been revealed to us, the course of JESUS' human soul during His Body's three days' rest, until He took again that life which He Himself laid down; and we could find that a great doctrine is at least partially spread out before us here; but we were to avoid statements of doctrine for the time: and we can find much of other teaching in these words.

* * * * *

The High Priest of the Jewish race, for many a year, in Tabernacle and in Temple, had been accustomed, by GOD's command, to enter the Holy of Holies once a year to make atonement for his own sins, and for those of the many thousands of Israel. He belonged to a religion of types, and on this great day he himself was performing only a typical act. To foretell a mystery which neither he nor the most subtle

doctors of his people had been able to fathom, he was on this day bound to lay aside the more glorious vestments which belonged to his exalted rank and office, and to enter the Sacred Place robed as a common priest. At other times he wore upon his breast twelve glittering jewels, on each one of which was inscribed the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. But as he entered the Holy of Holies, even these were left outside. In part, at least, all this was a type of the facts which we are witnessing on Calvary. I say, "*in part*," because no single type could altogether exhaust the reality of the Saviour's acts. He, who here is pleading before the eternal Holy of Holies, of which that on Mount Zion was but a figure, has indeed laid aside for the time His greater glory, and, robed in the inferior garments—even the flesh—of His own creature man, He is making atonement, not for His own sins, for He was sinless, but for the untold millions of humanity who had lived and died, and of those too who were to follow them in all time to come. But though He had emptied Himself of His glory, He had not put aside His love, and upon, aye and *in* His throbbing heart were borne the names of those He knew and knows, as He approached the mercy seat of God.

I do not stop now to argue concerning the different degrees of sin of which we ourselves, or others, have been guilty. At other times we have pleaded with you here to follow the examples of Apostles, Martyrs, Saints, whose holiness of life and crowns of glory have justly raised them in the estimation of the Church; but now we plead for the imitation of one whose name is unknown to us, but whose example is as a beacon-light, both to encourage and to warn. It is true we know at what particular hour of the day that mysterious darkness fell which shrouded all the land, but we do not certainly know at what particular moment this

penitent's prayer was uttered. It may have been out of that darkness that he cried, when only dimly amid the gloom he could see the Saviour's form and face, "LORD, remember me!" and the reply came quickly back, "To-day shalt thou be *with ME.*"

When we are entering upon any important duty in life, the consequences of which we cannot foretell, for we cannot pierce the darkness and the gloom which shroud all that is beyond, we know only that a duty lies before us,—What then? Ah! then, with a fervent offering of the prayer, "LORD, remember me," we will go on, and come what will, from Satan or from man, of "craft and subtlety," of malice and revenge, be sure of this—the assurance given to the penitent on the cross will be ours too, if not in vocal words, no less surely in the fact, and Christ's presence will be with us,—not to remove the suffering, perhaps, but to teach us how to bear it.

"Put thou thy trust in GOD,
In duty's path go on:
Walk in His strength with faith and hope,
So shall thy work be done."

Or, when upon us some sudden grief has fallen, because the very "light of our eyes" is taken away, or some crushing bereavement, like a stunning blow, has shut out the brightness of heaven, which before seemed shining on our life, then send up the pleading cry, though its very utterance may be imperfect in our sorrow, "LORD, remember me!" And know this truth,—that it is to no stranger heart we cry, but to One that loves with more than a mother's love, and One too who not only knows our sorrows, as our GOD, but Who, in the depth of His humanity sympathizes with our pain; and with His companionship, no pain should be too great for us to bear.

* * * * *

And when, at the last, that time draws near, from which all that is mortal within us shrinks, when the darkness of death is drawing nearer, and from our closing eyes the world is fast receding,—as we enter the “valley of the shadow,” Oh! then, above all other times, may the good GOD give us grace and power to utter from our hearts the cry, “LORD, remember me.” And if, at the former times in life, His reply has not been as plain as we could have wished, nor His guidance so direct, here at least we will have no doubt, for the light of Paradise is already shining through the gloom. “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” Then it will be ours to say, “Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”

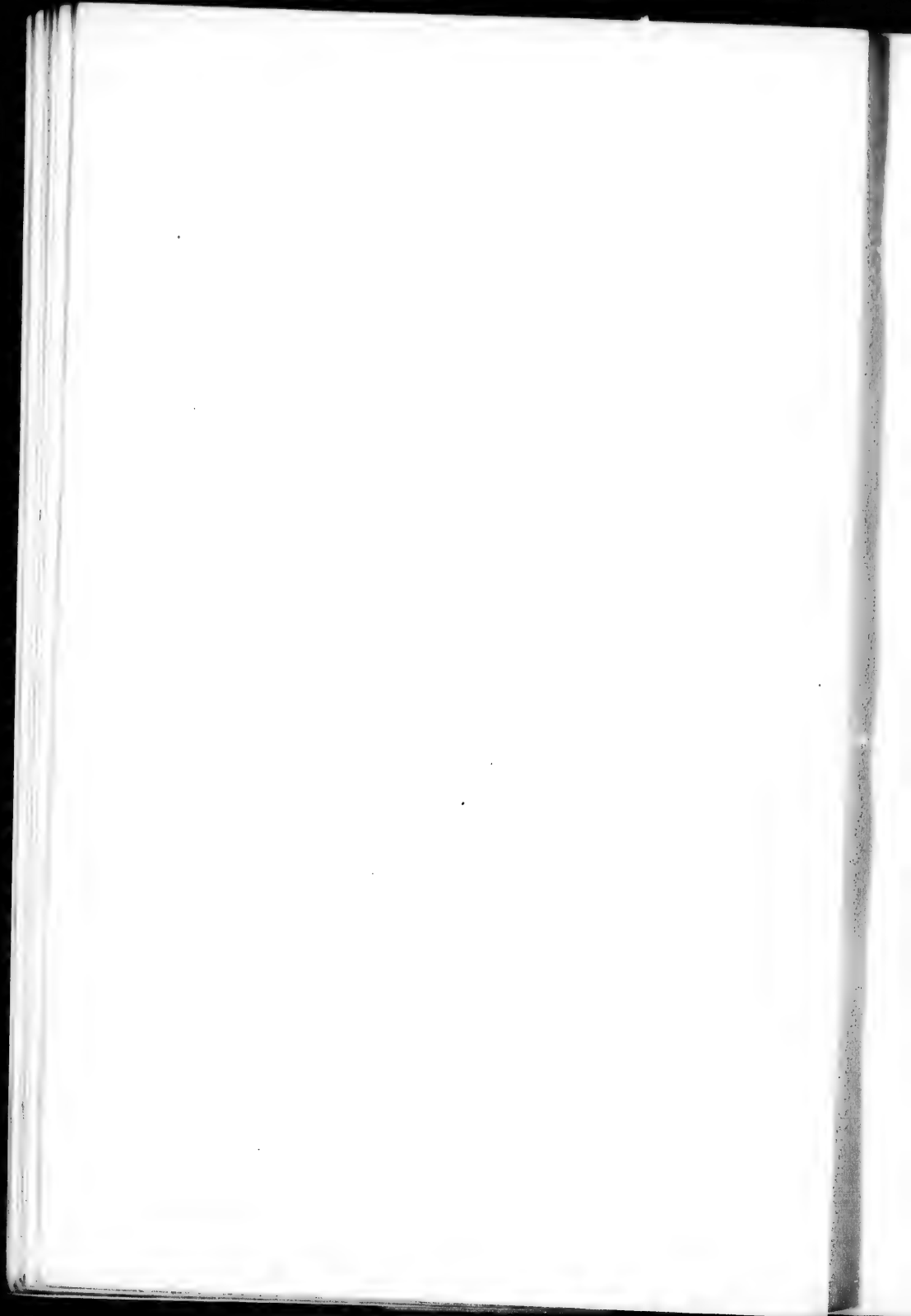
But lest at that last moment

“ * * * these failing lips grow dumb,
And thought and memory flee,”

we pray Thee now

“Since Thou *art* in Thy Kingdom come,
O LORD, remember me.”





III.

FILIAL LOVE.

"Behold thy Son." "Behold thy Mother." — ST. JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

THE actual work of the crucifixion was now over, and there remained only the weary interval, till death should come and bring relief to the Sufferer from His agony.

The shouts of mockery and the jeers, of which we have spoken, were very probably confined to the earlier hours of this awful scene; for the attending circumstances were such as to subdue alike the innocent and the guilty into silent dread. In natural course, under that usually clear and cloudless sky, at a season when—as travellers have told us—no rain fell, nor even a mist obscured the sun, the fierce heat of the early afternoon would now be beating down. But it was not so here! The sun itself was not only hidden, but apparently blotted out of heaven; the light of day was gone, and in its stead a heavy darkness fell upon the Temple, and covered the city, and closed in upon Calvary,—as though sympathizing nature would veil her LORD from further shame. It was no natural eclipse, for the Paschal moon was at its full; and yet that darkness was so dense and heavy as to remind us of a terrible period in older history, when once before the Almighty arm was bared for mighty deeds. *Then*, when GOD would lead His chosen people forth from their years of servitude under tyranny, in a land to which promised prosperity and earthly grandeur at

first had led them, He sent a "*thick* darkness" "that might be felt" upon the land. And now when, from a yet more servile bondage of many an age, He would lead his "whole creation" forth (Rom. viii. 22) once more the darkness fell; nor did it lift until the sacrifice was accomplished by which that deliverance was wrought.

You may remember that tradition and legend have gathered round this crisis of the crucifixion. How we have been told that the gross darkness was broken only by the flashes of lightning as they burst over the Holy of Holies, and that the earth trembled as with convulsive sobbing! How historians, as Phlegon and Phallus, have recorded that these things were not merely local: and besides, there was an oppressiveness in the very air that seemed to crush men's spirits to the earth. How we read that "Dionysius, the Areopagite" (Act xvii. 34) looked up towards heaven, and, in dread, exclaimed, "Some mighty convulsion of nature is taking place, or the GOD of nature Himself is dying!"

It is, of course, unnecessary for me to remind *you* that of these things the Gospel story says not one word. I mention them only to point out how great must have been the dread of the actual gazers around the cross when, years after, such statements as these could find easy credence. And so, it is possible, that under the influence of awe the crowd is lessening, and men, in fear of unknown calamity, are creeping in the darkness to their homes. The soldiers are, of course, remaining, for they are answerable with their own lives for the proper execution of the sentence of death upon the victims.

By the Roman law the clothes of those crucified belonged to the military guard. Of the garments of the "robbers" we are told nothing. Indeed, so closely has the attention of all become fixed upon the one Central Figure, that those

"on either side" seem for the time to be forgotten. The Evangelists themselves, after telling us of the absolution of the penitent, speak of him no more, except at the last, when a circumstance is told necessary to complete the account: and except for this one circumstance, and the fact that he, earlier in the day, had reviled the LORD, we are told absolutely nothing of the other victim upon the left. A silence which bids us, too, draw the veil at death: or if we speak at all, to speak (in the words of our church, whose breadth of charity in unsurpassed,) even as we stand beside the grave of one whose life has not been all we could have wished—"as our hope is this our brother doth," (*i. e.* sleep in Christ.)

But we were saying that by the Roman law the clothes of those crucified belonged to the military guard. Already they had torn into four pieces one of the garments of JESUS, and given "to every soldier a part;" but even they in their carelessness noticed that the other was unusual in this, that it was "woven from the top throughout,"—the gift, it may have been, of the loving sisters of Bethany. They had brought their dice with them to help them pass the weary hours during which they had expected to watch, and now they gamble for the seamless robe. What wonder that St. Matthew and St. John, both of whom were eye-witnesses of the scene, should remember that it was written (Ps. xxii. 18), "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."

But while some of the mob, with different emotions, are seeking their homes, and the soldiers are amusing themselves, we will, with reverence, draw a little nearer to the cross, for well we know that

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross we spend:
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend."

And now we perceive for the first time some women approaching too,—one of whom, in the front, is seemingly led and partly supported by a man still young. Both faces are well known to us: he is St. John, and she the pure Virgin-Mother of the dying JESUS. We have, at once, eyes and thoughts for none but these three. Here before Him were the two beings for whom, above all others in the world, JESUS had the deepest love. Of His love for His mother we need not speak; it was the natural emotion of a manly, noble heart. And as for the disciple who is with her now, let men tell us, if they will, that JESUS loved all mankind without exception: we will thank GOD for the knowledge that none need be excluded from the range of His wonderful love, save those who exclude themselves. But when they would have us believe that the Redeemer, as a man, knew no difference in His love for men, and that St. John's words of himself, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," were only the outcome of his own deep affection, which in its guilelessness supposed itself specially reciprocated, we can but reply,—we believe the Holy Ghost to have been the author of the Gospel, and St. John but the human instrument committing it to writing. Here then these so deeply loved are gazing at each other! No mortal mind may seek to fathom all the thoughts that are passing through One soul,—even in the commonest events, His thoughts so far transcended ours, that we could only be silent in wondering joy. And as we look at the Virgin's face, we can see that *there* are feelings beyond the power of words. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." It is true that

"Not e'en the dearest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reason why we smile or sigh;"

but her few murmured words, uttered half unconsciously, tell us that her mind is travelling back to scenes of which in

those days she scarcely knew the meaning. She remembers how, when her Son was but a little Babe, she took Him, in obedience to the Divine command, and with the glowing pride of her early maternal love, to the Temple to offer Him to the LORD. And there came an aged man, whose faltering step grew firm, and whose dim eye brightened as he drew near them. He took the Babe, and looking up to heaven, with holy ecstasy and with a gentle voice tremulous with joy, he uttered words of prayerful resignation and of faith: "LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word." And then, as he gazed at the young mother, whose heart was not at that time attuned to understand the words, he spoke mysteriously of a sword which was to pierce her heart "*also*." (St. Luke ii. 35.) Once before, since that day, she thought she knew the meaning of those words (St. Mark iii. 21, 31), but that was past; and she knew the real meaning now! Every shout of mockery, every cry of scorn, was like a sword-thrust. Each mallet-blow as it fell upon the nails, had smitten her most keenly, until her very heart seemed crushed and dead!

And standing here, the memory of yet one other scene flashed more vividly upon her. It was that of the death of him who for years of wedded life had been her loyal protector. But one day GOD had called him from his humble life, and she was left a widow with an only Son. How nobly that Son fulfilled his duty, is hinted at only in that simple reference which we have of the home life, where we are told that He was called "*the carpenter*" (St. Mark vi. 3).

And here this great, rough framework of the cross was that Son's death-bed, and the sounds that filled his ears were demon shouts of demon men. What wonder if, as the darkness fell upon the land, it seemed to her as though the very light of life was quenched, and she almost longed that

she, too, might die ! And then it was that, for the third time, JESUS spoke. Looking first at her who had given Him birth, He said in gentle tones, with words that have in them nothing but respect and love, "Woman, behold thy Son !" and then glancing at him whose loyalty had so well been proved, and whose worth was so well known, He bade him fill His own place in that widowed life, "Behold thy mother !"

JESUS' first utterance from the cross, as we have seen, was the intercession of the High Priest, especially for those who were about Him then ; but it was also His pleading for all mankind. His second was the application to one particular case, of His power of absolution as the Son of Man. But here, though suffering agony, He performs a grand act of human filial love.

Bear with me, brethren, if for one moment we retrace our steps. We were seeking to fathom—not unbecomingly, I hope—the blessed Virgin's thoughts, before her Son had spoken these last words ; but there was one thought, at least, which we may feel assured found no place in her mind then. Her conscience reproached her with no neglect in the early training of her Boy, such as had brought Him to this awful end of life. I am speaking, of course, as the Scripture story seems to suggest, that neither His mother nor His disciples even at this time "knew the Scriptures, that thus it must be."

It may be there are those among you here whose it has been, in the providence of GOD, to witness the death of your child. I would not harrow your feelings now, nor open those old wounds afresh. Happy indeed are you in this, if you can look back and say, "I taught my child the will of GOD."

Ah ! Christian parents, in your children you have immortal souls committed to your care ; and you, by your example and your precepts, may make or mar eternity for them.

But in this hour of His piteous suffering, JESUS, by His action here, as has been well said, "consecrated home life."

He spoke to that disciple whom He loved, and bade him occupy towards Himself a brother's place, as well as that of a son towards His mother. He spoke to that honoured mother, telling her that henceforth, in the place which He had occupied, she was to recognize St. John. And from that hour their home was the same! "JESUS consecrated home life." The words were *spoken* by Him to only two, but they have meaning for us all; for to each one of us here there is some centre, around which our hopes and affections cluster, and which we know as Home.

We can think that the heart of JESUS would yearn with tenderest pity over those who have not this priceless treasure, with its loving associations, and its guards of truth and virtue! Brothers and sisters, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Husbands and wives, let the rule of your home-life be this, "In honour preferring one another." Keep not the smiling face and cheery word only for them of the outer circle, and the gruff voice and the frowns for Home! Parents! to you we have already said, you have immortal souls to guide in early life, and the course which they receive from you will often be their guide for ever! Nor are the children, younger and older, without their lessons here! Have you ever seen those lines—"Honour thy father and thy mother," which have in them something of pathos, though they take a narrower view of the "commandment with promise" than we have been taught to receive.

"I knelt within the House of GOD,
At a gentle mourner's side;
And duly after each command,
Her quiet voice replied:

'O LORD, have mercy, and incline
My heart to keep this law of Thine!'

Once only from her silent lips
 No sweet response was heard—
 In answer to the Pastor's voice
 No gentle murmured word :
 'Honour thy father and thy mother' fell
 Silent, unanswered, like a dying knell."

Oh ! what a tale that mourner's silence told :
 How sad a page of human life unrolled !
 Silent : for well she knew that prayer or vow
 For those, the lost and mourned, was mockery now.
 And close she drew her veil, and bent her head,
 And well I knew she communed with the dead.

Who reads the tale ? Oh ! can'st thou lift thine eye,
 Thou happy one ! and see a father by ?
 Is there a crown of glory on his brow ?—
 Is his step slow, and his voice feeble now ?
 Beware ! beware ! the fount is almost dry,
 The ground is fading 'neath the watchful eye :
 A little while to look, to love, to pray,
 Then seek his place, and he shall be away.

Hast thou a mother, she who, day by day,
 Taught thee to move thy infant lips and pray ;
 She who hath pitied thee when others scorned,
 Wept thy soul's sickness, and in danger warned ;
 Hath borne with all thy youth's impetuous pride
 When this world's gauds have lured thee from her side ?
 And doth she suffer *yet*, and love, and strive,
 Thy care-worn mother !—is she yet alive ?
 Oh ! use the precious moments, bend thee now,
 And print a duteous kiss upon her brow.
 A little while, and all thy care, in vain,
 Would purchase oack such precious hours again ;
 A little while,—and when the Pastor's word,
 "Honour thy parents," shall be duly heard,
 Thy mournful soul will muse upon the line,
 Nor dare to answer—"LORD, my heart incline."

IV.

THE MOMENT OF DESERTION.

"My God, my God, why hast THOU forsaken me?" — ST. MARK XV. 34.

IF it was with feelings of deep solemnity and awe that, in the first instance, we approached this scene of Calvary which has thus far been the subject of our thoughts,—and such feelings certainly were uppermost in our minds, lest we should rashly tread where angels hovered softly,—be assured those emotions are not lessened now, as we are drawing nearer to the end.

If the very instincts, even of colder and harder natures, suggest that the step be muffled and gentle, and the voice be in whispers low, at the bed-side where a friend lies dying, how much more should our feelings be subdued during the life's last moments of the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and whose love eternity itself will not abate!

If in olden days and other lands it was customary for crowds of votaries to endure hardship, and to travel long distances in order to enquire of those Beings under whose guidance they supposed their own human affairs to be placed; and then to remain for days and weeks together, waiting a reply to their anxious inquiry,—entering the temple with bared feet, and prostrating themselves before the shrine to listen with bated breath when an answer did come from the inner sanctuary through human lips,—with what lowly respect will we bend to listen while JESUS speaks from the most sacred spot on earth!

And if Moses and Joshua, and other Saints and great men, who were our forerunners in the faith, would put their shoes from off their feet, when the very earth on which they stood was made holy by the special Presence of the Deity, we too will remember with reverence and awe that we are standing in the Presence of the Incarnate GOD !

There are yet other thoughts that press upon us here. It was but some five days before, St. John has told us (xii. 1-12), that amid the busy rush of the crowds that had come up to worship at the feast, there came to JESUS two of His disciples telling Him that some Greeks were anxious to see Him. The very mention of their nationality carried His mind, with the speed of thought, beyond the confines of Jerusalem and the boundaries of Judæa, out into the wide world beyond ; and with a keen suddenness there came to Him again, as there had come so often before, the conviction that He was to be made a spectacle at which the world would gaze ; only now He knew that the moment was very near. It has seemed to us, whenever we have read the words which St. John has recorded here, that a visible shudder shook the Saviour's frame as the request was made known to Him : it brought so terribly near the agony and shame from which His human nature shrank ; and as the blow seemed impending over Him, and ready to fall, His hands were outstretched with imploring attitude, and even *His* words for a moment seemed to fail—"Now is my soul troubled ; and *what shall I say ?* Father, save me from this hour !"

Or there was that other scene, more awful yet, which was the beginning of this Passion now nearing its close, and which occurred in the Garden beyond only the night before. So deep and terrible was His sorrow then, that once and again He fell to the ground prostrated by the very weight

of the load. And over and over, His faltering lips could only plead the self-same words. Ah! If even He, who had ever charmed the eager, listening multitudes with His gracious sayings, who "spake as never man spake," and whose lips indeed were eloquent with the mysterious power of speech,—if even He felt that the suffering, mental and physical, that lay before Him was almost too deep for utterance, we may well, with reason, reverently re-echo His own exclamation, now that His agony has reached its crisis: "The hour is come; what shall we say?" Some time has passed since last He spoke; then so calmly to His mother and His now adopted brother.

So far is the day advancing that over on Mount Zion the Priests are preparing to offer up the evening sacrifice, all unconscious that in the eyes of GOD it has no longer meaning or value. Around us, the unnatural shadows are closing so heavily that we come yet a little nearer to the cross, that we may see *His* face. We have heard from Him no sound that told us of His suffering,—not even a moan of pain; but His changed expression startles us now. We can remember—and it comes to us now in flashes of thought—how through life His face had always been calmly grave.

We can remember how one day, in the coasts of Decapolis, He had healed a man who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and even as He did so, He looked up to heaven, and sighed (St. Mark vii.), while a shade of sorrow settled upon His face, which we did not wholly understand.

We can remember—and as He Himself is nearing death it comes back to us all so vividly—how, not far away, in Bethany, as He stood before the grave of Lazarus, "four days dead," and worked His grandest miracle, "He groaned in His spirit, and was troubled." And even then we thought,

as the shadow of sorrow upon His face grew deeper, that its cause was not only the love He bore His friend!

We can remember, as we now stand in the gloom before the cross, how, but a few days before, He had ridden "in lowly pomp" from yonder Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. How, as the ringing shouts went up from all around, "Hosannah! in the highest!" that ever hovering shadow fell upon His face again, and the tears ran down His cheeks, while He uttered words brimming with sorrow, as He gazed longingly upon the city. We thought then that His sorrow was so deep and full, that He could scarcely be more sad; but now, as we gaze upon this haggard face, full of agony and woe, such that no brush could paint, nor human tongue can tell, we know that those shadows were but as the dark ruffle of the breeze preceding the storm upon the surface of the summer lake, compared with this which is like the mid-night blackness of the yawning wave in mid-ocean, while the winter wind howls through the rigging of the driving ship!

And now the head is raised with a convulsive motion, as one might seek to hold back a retreating figure (see 1 Sam. xv. 27), and as though the heart were really breaking, and the brave spirit at last was crushed, there burst forth in wailing cry the words, "My GOD, my GOD, why hast THOU forsaken me!"

* * * * *

"BY THINE UNKNOWN AGONIES; GOOD LORD, DELIVER US."

* * * * *

There are inscriptions graven on the rocks in other lands, and in unknown signs, which for many years puzzled the learning of the world: until perseverance and ingenuity of man have unlocked the secret, and given the knowledge

to their fellow men. But sages might kneel here for centuries, and bring to bear upon these words the accumulated wisdom of mankind,—the darkness which hung over Calvary would shroud them still. They were misunderstood as they were uttered there (St. Mark xv. 35), we cannot tell their full meaning now.

The Poet Laureate has recently drawn for us a picture of "Despair;" a picture full of wild, weird power and pathos. He takes two persons, may we say without unkindness, of contracted minds, rendered yet more contracted by the agnostic literature they had read, and driven back upon themselves, they resolve to end their lives; and since there is no future in their thoughts, when they might meet again, they bid each other "forever and ever farewell." And then the Poet exclaims—

"Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began,

Never a word so sad, no, not since the coming of man!"

Terrible indeed would be the thought of no meeting after death with those we love in life; but when we compare the cry of hearts such as those with this of Christ, it is like dropping the plummet in the wayside pool, then seeking with its measure to gauge the unfathomed depths of ocean. Nor can we find anything in the sacred record which approaches a parallel.

Years before, the Blessed Virgin had sought her Child, whom she had lost, and "*sorrowed*" in her maternal anxiety and love in the agony of separation; but, as we read the story, she found her Boy as she gave utterance to her grief.

Far earlier than this, when even the Divine patience seemed exhausted with the rebellions of the people, and God was about to withdraw His presence, the old Lawgiver of Israel, appalled at the awful thought, gasped forth, "If thy Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." But

in the same moment the reply came back, "My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

But here, the agonized cry went up through space in hopeless search of a GOD who had withdrawn His Presence from the human soul of Christ! In all the history of our race, this was the one true longing of a believing heart for the Presence of GOD, which was passed unheeded by!

Can we not remind you, in passing, what power and yet what tenderness this scene adds to those words the Saviour uttered only the evening before, as He was telling His disciples of their coming desertion of Himself: "Ye shall leave me alone," he had said in gentle grief; then added, as though in triumph, "And yet I am not alone, *because the Father is with me.*" (St. John xvi. 32.)

But now, His desertion was indeed complete!

My brethren, have such words as these ever passed human lips,—I mean, with *reality* of meaning? Often and often, I know, when disappointments come, and afflictions fall, and life itself seems dark, we *think* that GOD has deserted us, and that we are left alone. So thought the Israelites, groaning under the bondage in Egypt, when it seemed to them as though the GOD of their fathers had cast them from His remembrance. Yet, though many years did pass, and hundreds of their race lived in bondage, and died perhaps in doubt, GOD said to Moses when sending him to be the deliverer of his brethren, "I know their sorrows." Year by year, as we count years, He that inhabiteth eternity had listened to their cry; though the purposes of His Providence, and the chastisement were yet to be accomplished.

So thought again the children of the Captivity in after years in Babylon, that GOD had forgotten to be gracious; and the harps were hung upon the trees by the water-side, and the voice of melody was silent. But all the while GOD

had already, in His foreknowledge, provided one, even by name, nearly two centuries before, who should be the instrument of their deliverance.

So, too, men and women have thought in every land, and in every age since then. To some among ourselves, it may be, the conviction has come with terrible apparent reality in our moments of deep depression, when "days are dark, and friends are few!"

But I cannot think I am erring against the revelation of OUR FATHER'S will when I say, it is not really so, nor can it be this side the grave. It is not long since we were speaking of the robber, whose life had, doubtless, been an abandoned one. But with the first breathing of the uttered prayer of penitence, there came the gracious reply of pardon. And yet, he had but the dregs of a wasted life to give to GOD! True, it has been well said, there is but one such instance given, that we should not presume: there *is one*, that we should not despair. But can we think that if the other companion in crucifixion had prayed as well in penitence, Christ would have turned a deaf ear to his entreaty? "The revelation of *our Father's* will," did we say but a moment ago? And is there one among us who has known what it is to experience earth's love of father or mother, which is only the "broken reflection" at best, of what THE Father feels: Is there such an one among us who could forget our child, though the life had been wayward and wild? Not yet has the story of the Prodigal's Return faded from our memories; and each one among us knows it to be true to life, "When he saw him yet a great way off, he ran to meet him!" Be it that among human hearts one may be found so cold as to forget her boy, but GOD will not forget!

Be it that after the Judgment shall be set, and the Books be opened, and upon each one of the millions of earth

Eternity's sentence shall have been irrevocably sealed by unerring Justice, the lot of some will be to lament for ever their separation from GOD ; but in the Divine longsuffering the day of Judgment has not yet come ! " Ah ! but," poor Doubting-Heart will say, " the Father did withdraw His Presence even from His well-beloved Son ! " Yes, and it is just because of this that we have dared to say He will not do so from us.

It was while the waters of the Flood, which had descended on the earth and destroyed its guilty inhabitants, had not yet subsided, that the rescued eight saw the Bow of Covenant of Promise in the sky. Just so, Christ's darkest hour is the source of the Christian's brightest joy. From the moment of His deepest mental anguish, the Christian dates his triumph and his peace. It is because He became a curse for us that the Christian escapes the curse. It is because He, in the awful moment of darkness and of death, for one instant knew not the sustaining presence of the Father, that the dying Christian can say, with joyful confidence, " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." It is because He, when suffering in the stead of sinners, cried out in the awful reality of desertion by GOD, " My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou forsaken me ! " that repentant Faith can say, in grand words, that did not begin with earth, nor will end with time, " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? " " I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD, which is in Christ Jesus our LORD."

V.

CHRIST'S THIRST.

"After this, JESUS, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, 'I thirst.'"—ST. JOHN xix. 28.

"How much the heart may bear, and yet not break!
How much the flesh may suffer, and not die!
I question much if any pain or ache
Of soul or body brings the end more nigh:
Death chooses his own time,—till that is worn,
All evils may be borne."

SUCH words as these are doubtless true of us; and they were true of Him of Whom our thoughts are full, except in so far as they speak of Death waiting "his own time;" for here he waited Christ's. Those words were true, "No man taketh My life from Me; I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

After that last great cry of a heart struggling with despair, JESUS still lives. But the end is not far off, for the climax of the crucifixion has been reached in *that* cry.

The remaining events now follow each other rapidly. He had uttered those words, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani,*" probably with parched lips and swollen tongue; and because of this, and because the awe-struck crowd were momentarily fearing some dread event, they mistook His words, and supposed Him to be calling for Elias. And so quickly did these words, of which we speak to-night, follow

the last, that when one standing near ran to moisten His lips, at the mention of His thirst, another checked him, saying, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

But this unknown man had more compassion than the rest, and as he heard those words, "I thirst," he took the piece of sponge—which, it has been conjectured, was used as a stopper for the *posca*, or jar, in which the soldiers had brought their common drink of sour wine, or vinegar—and placed it upon a stalk of hyssop about a foot and a half long, and put it to the Sufferer's lips. Christ did not refuse the drink; as we remember He had done that which was offered to Him in the morning, when first He had reached Calvary. But that was because the earlier offered drink was a mixture, as St. Matthew has told us, of "vinegar mingled with gall," or as St. Mark expresses it, "wine mingled with myrrh," which was intended to stupify the intellect, and deaden the sense of pain; and therefore He would not drink it. But when this moistened sponge was placed to His lips, He did not reject it, for it held but the common wine.

We will think of these words, "I thirst," then, as expressive first of His bodily suffering; and they are the only recorded words spoken by Him all through His Passion which can be so applied.

Thus far, we have not sought to describe those sufferings in detail, because, though the accounts of other crucifixions dwell upon each minute particular, until the very heart grows sickened as we read, the writers of the Gospel story in their calm, and even majestic writing, do not do so. They seem to take it for granted that there is here a Being who moves upon too high a plane, for them to be engrossed with details; and we will seek, even now, to follow their example.

It may be we have never known in our own experience how terrible are the pangs of a burning, consuming thirst. But we have read at different times of travellers in the desert straying from the pathway, when it was obliterated by the drifting sand. Supposing themselves to be still pursuing the right direction, they have kept on, until they have wandered far out of the track of all springs or oases; and their supply of water, unreplenished for days, and drawn upon so largely by animals and men, has grown less and less, in spite of their stinting allowance, and of their efforts to regain the lost pathway, and find more.

Already their sufferings have been intense, and are hourly increasing. The last doled out drop of water has only quickened a feverish desire that will not be quenched. Far away back the regularity of the procession was broken, as each, in the wild struggle for life, pressed on in the direction he thought would bring him right. And now on each side of them, and behind, the survivors can see dark mounds which tell that the animals have yielded to the weary search, which, it seems, can know one end, and only one: while if they could any longer have been moved by the tender feelings of humanity, they would have shuddered as they noticed that other prostrate, huddled figures here and there were too small to be mistaken for their beasts of burden. But He is too dear now for sympathy, and they struggle on in their misery and weakness. Above them the unyielding sky is like iron; beneath their feet the burning sand is as brass; and one by one they fall, despite their brave efforts, and their cries and prayers,—believing, poor souls, to the very last in their delirium, that a few steps more would give them what they need.

We have read, too—and we know not which is the sadder story—of shipwrecked sailors drifting for days in an

open boat, and consumed with a raging thirst, though floating on the very element they needed so much, but which *here* they dared not touch.

"Water, water, everywhere, but not a drop to drink!"

Who among us was unmoved, as but the other day we read just such a story; and among the castaways were a woman and her little babe. Her silent bravery and self-denial moved us much: the cries of infant lips, as those little lips grew parched and cracked, moved us yet more. Often, in such cases as these, the fierce energy of thirst, with its terrible power, conquers prudence and knowledge, and some drink of the salt sea around them, until a quick delirium overtakes them, and, in heaven's pity (?) they dream of green fields and babbling brooks,—and die!

One step nearer than this to us the knowledge of thirst may have come. It may have been ours ere now to watch by the bedside of the fever-stricken sufferer. And through the weary hours of the night, as the restless hands are ever moving, and the body is thrown from side to side, we remember that the burning fire of the fever seemed to have deadened all sense of other pain but this awful thirst, which, in our despair, we thought that only death could quench! And we then learnt more than ever of the terrible power of this form of suffering. When, in our weary waiting through those hours for the dawn, we read once more the "*Revelation*" of the Future, we turned instinctively to that chapter (vii. 16) where the Apostle draws his picture with the few bold strokes of a master hand; and among those strokes this one was not unworthy of a place, "They shall hunger no more, *neither thirst any more!*"

And when from this we turned once to read of Him who had emptied Himself of His innate glory, and left the joys of heaven to come to earth to die, it came to us with a deeper

meaning than before, that He allowed Himself to be exposed to that acutest suffering from which hereafter the humblest saint shall be forever free.

It is then more than His perfect manhood that we read in the words "*I thirst.*" We hear also the expression of His human sympathy with human pain. We can think that, though He no longer *knows* this kind of thirst in His ascended life, that same human heart of JESUS which was, as we think of Him to-night, just ceasing to beat upon the cross, still throbs in sympathy with the suffering wanderers in the desert, or the castaways at sea, or the fever-stricken patient: nor only with these, but with the countless other forms of human pain He sympathizes too; and it is as true to-day as it was so long ago, He "knows the sorrows" of His people.

* * * * *

But there is much more than this in these words, "*I thirst;*" for we are expressly told that Christ uttered them "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." The very words, "Knowing that all things were now accomplished," seem to tell of calm, collected thought; of careful examination of the recent past, and of all the Prophets had spoken concerning Himself, more than of mere bodily pain.

There was a day in His former ministry, we remember, when, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the glory which was veiled within Him blazed forth, until His very raiment was "white and glistening." And there talked with Him two visitants from another world,—one, upon whose name just now the swaying mob had thought He called; the other, the aged saint whose eyes had once rested upon these very hills with "unsatisfied longing," but upon which his feet had "never trod," "and they talked of His decease,"—of the very scene that we have been watching here. But all that

is now changed : the brightness then, is blackness now : he who then, in his rapturous joy, had said "LORD, it is good for us to be here," had forsaken Him, and fled : and yet—may we venture to express such a supposition—it would seem as though in the gloom the spirit visitants were here, and pass in shadowy procession before the cross. The Prophets who had spoken of Him and His life and deeds, once more recite their words before Him ; from Abel, with his ghastly speaking wounds, which are all too truly repeated here ; save that those cried for vengeance, these for pardon. (Heb. xii. 24.) Once more, the journey is undertaken by Abraham and his Son to Mount Moriah, and Isaac bears the wood : but Christ had already borne His cross. And Isaiah tells of the Blessed Virgin Mother ; but she has just been entrusted to the care of the beloved disciple. And Zechariah again laments the humiliating bargain of the thirty pieces of silver : but some hours ago they were flung back to the care of the Priests by the traitor.

And so all down to Malachi, with his Messenger, who had come, fulfilled his task, and met his bloody death : all through, they pass with spirit speed, like ghostly visitants of the night, and fade away in the darkness, for all has been fulfilled. All but one : one little chord of David's harp is not yet silent—"They gave Me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to drink !" So small was this that the keenest and most hostile critic might have passed it by. But sooner that the very heavens should fall, than that one little word of GOD should fail, for "the Scripture cannot be broken" (St. John x. 35), and therefore He who had hitherto maintained a majestic silence in His suffering, even in defiance of exquisite torture, will now expose Himself to the possibility of fresh insult, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

We will not *now* dwell more at length upon the thought; but the second lesson we would learn from these words of JESUS is the great reverence shown by our LORD for the Word of GOD; so that, even when dying, He would allow no single statement, however minute, to remain unfulfilled.

Nor is this yet all we would say and learn. From the fact that all the circumstances of crucifixion were such as to create a raging thirst, we have allowed ourselves to think that JESUS permitted His bodily sufferings to be thus far known to His persecutors. From the express words of Scripture we have seen that He thus spoke because of His deep respect for Scripture. There is yet more.

We have seen the statement made that words, once uttered, sound ever on and on, ever pulsating through the waves of air which they first create, and whose motion is communicated to other waves, and so the sound ever reverberates, and cannot cease as long as earth shall last. Be this as it may; of these words, "I thirst," we will venture more than this. The lips that here first uttered them, can feel again no bodily thirst; but the Heart that yearned for the souls of men that day and the preceding days, can never change, nor cease its yearning while there are souls to be saved. And as the years have passed since Calvary bore the cross of Christ, and generations of men have come and gone, the Redeemer still "*thirsts*" for human souls with a thirst that can be quenched only with the tears of true penitence, and persevering love. To us, old and young, He cries across the centuries and ages that have passed, across the chasms of time and space that separate the cross and heaven from each other, and from us. We are not pressing the words too far. The Saviour Himself has used this imagery. When wearied and dust-stained with travel, He sat on the well in Samaria, it was not only of the "water" that she had come to draw, of which He spoke to the woman.

"If any man thirst," He cried on the great day of the feast, "let him come unto Me, and drink." With the same full words He had commissioned His prophet of old to invite the human race, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." It is thus He thirsts with a quenchless thirst for human souls, with a thirst which will not cease until (and no man knows the limit of this word "until") that other statement is fulfilled, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, *and be satisfied*."

We have spoken of our words sounding on and ever, with unending reverberations. We have seen also the poetic fancy that by the power of the light which surrounds our earth, and extends through space, our every act is photographed upon the canvas of the sky; and at the last they will be spread out in awful panorama before us at the judgment! Ah! if that scene of *Calvary* was "*fixed*" upon the heavens, then it has been reflected upon the earth through all these ages since. There was, and is, a course of conduct of which an Apostle can find no other words than these: "They crucify to themselves the Son of GOD afresh, and put Him to an open shame!" But while He thirsted there on Calvary, the ribald crowd were mocking at His pain, and possibly coarse soldiers toasted Him in scorn at their mid-day meal. And we? We go by, and drink to the full of pleasure, and gaiety and self-interest; perhaps of untruth; certainly of coldness and indifference, of excitement and frivolity: and yet He yearns and thirsts for the souls He has redeemed.

Cannot something of the rest of the picture be reflected too? One ran and moistened a sponge and put it to His lips, and for the moment, at least, gave some relief. We have it in our power to do much towards quenching the thirst that now He feels. It is His own voice that is plead-

ing with us, though the words as they are heard are only those of man: "Son, daughter, give me thine heart."

His are the thousand sparkling rills,
That from a thousand fountains burst,
And fill with music all the hills;
And yet He saith, "I thirst."

All fiery pangs on battle-fields,
On fever beds where sick men toss,
Are in that human cry He yields
To anguish on the Cross.

But more than pains that racked Him then
Was the deep, longing thirst Divine,
That thirsted for the souls of men;
Dear LORD! and one was mine.

O Love most patient, give me grace;
Make all my soul athirst for Thee:
That parched, dry Lip, that fading Face,
That Thirst were all for me.

No. 119 A. & M.

VI.

VICTORY AND JOY.

"It is finished." — ST. JOHN xix. 30.

OUR spirits seem to find relief to-night, although we are approaching nearer to the end : for the Saviour's sufferings reached their climax, and the darkness its deepest gloom, at the moment of that cry—"My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me!"

The traveller, as he seeks on foot to make his way to his home, where he well knows fond hearts await him, feels his exposure keenly if while there is yet many a weary mile to be traversed, the darkness overtakes him, and with it a blinding storm. But his spirits rise and his step grows firmer, if, after much difficulty he reaches the summit of a hill from which, in a lull in the storm, he can catch a glimpse of a well-known light which tells him that his home, though distant, is yet within view.

"As when the weary traveller gains
The height of some o'er-looking hill :
His heart revives, if 'cross the plains,
He views his home, though distant still."

The fever-stricken patient, tossing upon his bed in sleepless restlessness throughout the night, hails with grateful joy the first gleam of the dawn, which seems to bring a soothing power, though it does not end his sickness.

The General who is directing the battle on which great issues depend,—the success of his cause, the honour of his

country, the safety of his army, and his own reputation,—will watch with the keenest anxiety as the hostile forces close, and the fight rages more and more hotly around a central point which he has all along seen must be the key of the position, and secure victory to the winner. And when he sees the ranks of the enemy wavering, and then breaking, after stubbornly and bravely holding their own, an involuntary "Thank God!" bursts from his lips; and *his* spirit finds relief, though the battle is not yet altogether over.

It is so with us to-night. We have watched, I hope not altogether without interest, and followed step by step this Traveller since the morning, as He toiled along the *via Dolorosa*, falling beneath His heavy burden of sorrow and the cross. We could dimly see Him as the darkness overtook Him, and the fierce storm swept round about Him, and He seemed to shrink for one moment from its awfulness and power! (St. Matt. xxvi. 39.) But the journey seems nearly over now.

We have watched Him hour by hour suffering agonies of body, but yet more especially of mind and soul such as no fever-patient ever knew: we have heard His cries which, like swords, have pierced the inmost hearts of those who loved Him; but the deep darkness is yielding now, and the Sufferer is more calm.

And a terrific battle has been waging here, though to us both battle-field and forces are unseen; nor has the fight been ours either to direct or share; but we have evidence which cannot be mistaken that the Great Captain sees the enemy retreating.

After the contest in the wilderness with Satan years before, we remember that "Angels came and ministered unto Him." After a yet greater struggle with the same foe, but a few hours since, again an Angel came to strengthen Him.

And it would almost seem, though we do not surely know, as if there was the same messenger of strength and consolation near Him now. The darkness, we have said, is lifting, and we cannot but notice that His form is not so drooping as it was but a moment before, nor is His face so haggard and wan. From far away, even as though from heaven itself, there comes shining down upon Him a mellow light, through the henceforth open gates, which nevermore shall close; and under its radiant beams the rough frame of Roman torture on which He hangs is transformed into a royal throne. His crown of thorns seems glowing like a regal diadem, and each red drop of blood upon His brow is shining like some precious stone. As with instinctive impulse we step nearer to the cross, there is a perceptible gathering of the wounded limbs, as if for some final effort, and then the Head is raised, and out, over watching disciples, and guarding soldiers, and the formerly mocking but now awe-stricken crowd; out as if it would resound throughout the boundaries of earth, and re-echo through the realms of space; be taken up in Heaven, nor be unheard in Hades,—there sounds one grand and kingly word from the Conqueror, though to tell it requires three words from us, "*Tetelestai*," "It is finished!"

* * * * *

To whom was He speaking when He uttered this word?

There was a scene in His own ministry when, as the Head of the Church, He sent His disciples out to perform great duties in His name. And they returned in time to tell Him "*what they had done and what they had taught.*" They rendered to Him an account of the manner in which they had performed their duty, and used the powers entrusted to them.

To each child of man in his day some work is given to do, some post to fill, some mission to perform; and to each

one will come the time when he must stand before the judgment seat and render an account of the manner in which the duty has been done.

Not yet, while JESUS hung upon the cross, had "all judgment been committed unto the Son;" and He stood, as it were, before the Father's seat of judgment now. A great work had been given Him to do. Just before He uttered this single word He had taken in, as we have seen in one comprehensive glance, the whole compass of that work, and had fulfilled even its last minute demand upon Him, so that with a holy confidence He could say, "It is done." The great law of Eternal Justice remains unbroken, and yet poor sinners may be saved. "Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

But we will not look at only half the truth, while the Son addresses the Father. That Father was not only a Judge of the manner in which the work was done, but He was also a co-partner in that work. Mysterious to us are the communings which took place between the Persons of the blessed Trinity in the long past of eternity,—for thus must we speak in our poor language of that sphere where Time is not. We read them as though some of the echoings of Heaven's voices had come down to earth—"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" "Here am I, send me." The Divine yearnings were at work long ages before "the fulness of time" was reached among men, and Love provided a Surety.

And then we hear not echoings merely, but human words from the lips of the human Christ: words which tell with pathos and tenderness of man's misunderstanding and his sin: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee!" "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Let the heathen world cower in terror before some malignant deity, armed, like Zeus or Jupiter, only with thunderbolts to destroy. It is not so here with Christians, for now the unutterable love of the Incarnate Son tells it to the equal love of the Eternal Father that their co-work of Love has been performed.

And let us mention, as we pass, that beside these truths of the Justice and the Love of GOD, we learn here from Christ the lesson of unswerving fidelity to duty: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

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While in ordinary history we would not dwell too strongly on separate phrases, or on single words, we may here with great reason be led further in our own thoughts, since it is intimated that this cry of the Saviour was uttered "with a loud voice." We know that man's feeblest utterance can reach to the ears of GOD. We know that even the unspoken thought of the penitent heart will not be unnoticed by Him: but this was "loud," because it was a shout of triumph and of joy.

"For this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." Many thousands of years before some words of promise were uttered, (perhaps His voice—not then human—uttered them,) and they were now fulfilled. "And the LORD GOD said unto the Serpent, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. iii. 14, 15.) And though centuries must roll between the promise and its fulfilment, and a vast machinery be set in motion, and great agencies be employed, yet all is over now, and the work is "finished." But see: before us here there is a Man in the very degradation of shame, exposed to mockery and scorn,

with limbs nailed to the cross, wounded and bleeding : the cry of a crushed spirit in its agony has already been uttered, and He is dying now : and all this in the Divine language is, "thou shalt bruise his *heel* !" How absolutely complete then must be His victory over Satan, when the same lips express it thus, "It shall bruise thy *head* !" This word was a shout of victory ; but it was also one of joy. If "there is joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over *one* sinner that repenteth, what joy was His, who loved as never angels could, over the many millions of those who have been, and who shall be saved by His death ? It was, we remember, "for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross, despising the shame ;" and even now we may think He began to "see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied."

* * * * *

Bear with me yet a moment while I add two words of gentle warning. When we were speaking of those words in which the Saviour gave expression to His crushing sorrow, when GOD forsook Him, we intimated that no Christian heart could echo them with His depth or truth of meaning. It is, I think, the same with these. No man could utter them as JESUS did. When at the last we come to lay down the burden of life, it will be in the power of none of us to say, even of our ordinary duties, much less of our spiritual progress, "My work is done." I do not mean by this only that the soul's spiritual advancement will be continuous and continual, not suspended by death, and lasting through eternity ; but also that there are flaws in every human character, and that imperfection is stamped on every human life. It is this one thought which tends in any way to soothe the feeling of almost horror that we experience in seeing a broken pillar marking the spot where a Christian sleeps. You know

that it was a heathen symbol denoting that this life was all, and there was nothing beyond. It is therefore we wish that surviving friends would not thus mark the spot where the body of one loved is laid, because, thus understood, it denies the "life and immortality" which were "brought to light in the Gospel." But when we do see it by a Christian's grave we *try* to translate it as an admission of the imperfect state of sanctification to which the soul attained while here; and of the lack of completeness in the performance of Christian duties.

And the other word of warning yet to be uttered is made necessary by the undue pressing of this very thought of the imperfection of our work. "We cannot do all: we can do nothing: but Christ has already done all, and said, 'It is finished.'" It is well to feel our own weakness and insufficiency. Let us ever remember the Saviour's words, "Without Me ye can do nothing;" but let us remember as well the reply He sent to an Apostle's prayer, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," and how that Apostle could write, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." It is well that we should feel the words we often sing:

"Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee;
O LAMB OF GOD, I come."

Be it, that we should say and mean—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

But never forget that a command is yet laid upon each one of us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."

You may remember how it is recorded of one of Rome's greatest Emperors as he lay on his death-bed at York, he

sighed out, "I have accomplished nothing!" yet when, a moment afterwards, the captain of his guard came to him for the watchword of the night, with his dying breath he gave it—" *Laboremus*," "Let us work." So let the spotless life and finished work of Christ remind us: let the lives, full of toil of the saints that are dead, and the "wrestling" lives of the saints that are living, tell us too, that throughout our lives our watchword even to the end should be "*Laboremus*."
"Let us work!"



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VII.

THE SOUL'S REFUGE.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." — ST. LUKE xxiii. 46.

It has been ours, ere now, escaping from more bustling scenes into the depth of the forest's seclusion, to trace there the course of a short mountain brook, as, welling up from a spring in the hill-side, it ran with rapid torrent to its end. Almost like a conscious thing of life it springs on with a joyous music, as though it had some grand mission to fulfil, and would not stay.

From the very first its course is no easy one : rocks are there in plenty which would stop its way, but eddying round them, it hurries on. Further down in what was once a mossy dell, where woodland flowers grew, it seems to rest for one moment in a quiet pool ; and through the overarching branches, with their budding leaves of Spring, there fall some flecks of sunlight, resting gently on its surface. But in a moment it is on again, as though its course were too short for rest, and just near its end it must pass through a narrow gorge with jagged rocks on this side and on that ; and here its waves, deeper and stronger than before, seem for an instant to turn upon themselves and toss in agony, as if they would willingly escape their fate ; but as the rocks are past, swift as an arrow from the string, and yet so softly as not even to break the surface, it darts into the refuge of a spreading lake, where its waters bask in the sunshine of heaven.

Are we altogether wrong in speaking of our LORD's brief life under the comparison of a stream? We remember that one of His own favourite symbols of Himself was "living water," and it was only a few days before He died that He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

Again and again we have observed how the day has broken with uncertain promise, because clouds concealed the sun. There have been moments of brightness, but there have been throbblings in the air, like the flutterings of an imprisoned bird, and they tell us of a coming storm, which breaks by and by with sudden fury, and the clouds grow heavier and the rain falls faster as the hours wear on.

Now the day is nearly done, yet the storm seems at its height: there is a flash of lightning and a roar of thunder over head; but just as the sun is sinking, he seems to burst through the clouds and look out upon the war of elements. With the same mysterious power that in the morning drives the wild beasts to their lair, the storm is quelled; the rain ceases, the wind is hushed, and the evening is calm and peaceful as the sun sinks to his rest.

Neither here are we wrong in our comparison; for storms raged fiercely around Him, especially during the latter days of His life. And yet all the while, like the sun behind the clouds, there was a majestic calmness ever in His spirit, which alike won His friends and awed His foes; for He was the "Sun of *Righteousness*."

It may have been ours, in past days, since

"The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings for the dead,"

to watch for many a weary hour beside the bed of one well-loved, whom we knew to be dying. I speak not of one of

those cases when GOD—not always in His anger, but often in His mercy—sends a short and sudden stroke, and all is over. But I mean, when the end comes slowly, so slowly that sometimes at midnight we think we can almost see the form of Death, and hear his footfall. Gradually the sufferer's strength has failed, yet the brain is working madly and without restraint of will. Thoughts are rushing by in a swift procession; but though the voice is scarce ever silent, we cannot interpret them. That voice was dear and familiar to us, but even the keen ear of love cannot catch all that is uttered now. The prayer had almost been spoken that the end might come, when suddenly the features became calm and settled, as of old; a conscious light beamed in the eyes; a smile found expression on the lips, and with a whispered word in the voice of old, the end did come.

JESUS is dying now, as we stand before the cross to-night. If we had taken time to think in detail of His sufferings, we would have been surprised—as plainly enough the Centurion was—that He should die so soon. The soldier has often heard, and perhaps has watched by their crosses, of men who have thus lived on for days, as though death would not come,—life would not go. His attention was fixed by that shout of a single word, uttered with no feeble voice as if of a dying man, and now his whole attitude and face tell of something very like Christian adoration. So engrossed have we been with this one Sufferer on the central cross, that we have scarce noticed the others since the morning. But now as we look we observe that the eyes of both are fixed with ours on *His* face, but with a great difference of expression. This one upon the right is looking with a wistful, pleading hope, as though expecting that the promise made to him hours before would not wait long for fulfilment now. But

that of the other is a scowling face, proclaiming with no need of words, that very storms of anger are garnered there. In both the faces there is observable a more than natural heaviness or stupor; but we remember that they drank of the wine and gall, which *He* refused: but in them there is no sign of death. Yet JESUS is dying! We will not try, as others do, to find a reason for His earlier death in the fact of His more sensitive nature and prolonged mental agony. That this was great, beyond all power of utterance, we do not doubt; but neither do we doubt that highly sensitive natures have thousands of times borne pain more nobly, and with less flinching, than those of coarser mould.

The plain assertions of Scripture are sufficient for our explanation. From the very foundation of the world the Eternal Son, in His Divine prescience, had chosen the particular period when He would come into the world; and He sent His messenger before His face when that time was come. And just as He had chosen His own time to be born, so He chose His own time to die. More than once He purposely avoided possibly fatal danger, because that particular hour was not yet come. (St. Luke iv. 30, and St. John viii. 59.) But when it did come, He lay down His life of His own free will. "No man taketh My life from Me; I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And as He now "*dismissed His Spirit*" (St. Matt. xxvii. 50), He breathed it out with these last calm words before His death, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

"Father!" It was the first word He spoke as He was being nailed to the cross, and then it was uttered in a voice of earnest entreaty. "*Father!*" It is one of His last words too, and now it comes almost in a whisper of happy trust, as a child might say "Good night." His work was done, and He fell asleep.

* * * * *

How the words would linger in the disciples' minds we can easily imagine. How they sought humbly to echo their spirit can be seen in two instances even in the inspired story.

In the first martyr's case the scene in the Hall of Gazith was over, and though his face beamed with a celestial brightness, they had dragged him beyond the wall, and the fierce stones were crushing out his life. But looking up to heaven he saw the beatific vision, and with the memory of that same LORD's dying words, he prayed, "LORD JESUS, receive my spirit;" and when he had said this, he, too, "fell asleep."

A "young man whose name was Saul" was there that day. We cannot find it difficult to suppose that the logical argument of the young Deacon, on trial for his life, had a great effect upon his well-trained mind. It is yet more easy and natural to suppose that the glowing face of the martyr, as it shone with a heavenly and angelic light, would be a haunting memory that even the darkness would not hide; and again and again that dying prayer must have echoed through the persecutor's soul! And since then he, too, had "seen the LORD," and had been claimed for His. And now, after years of faithful labour in the cause of Christ, the aged Apostle knows that such work as he can do is done, his race is over, and the prospect of martyrdom is very near. He is not unmindful of the Christian privilege,—not forgetful of the true refuge of the departing soul, and so he writes, "I know *Whom* I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep *THAT* which I have committed unto Him against that day."

How different is all this from the way in which we look at death! Certainly there comes to us with its every

thought, because of its awful mysteries, an instinctive dread which makes our human nature shrink ; but as Christians, we should pray that, in the mercy of GOD, we might have "in the hour of death" a calm confidence and holy peace.

A saintly Bishop of our Church has taught us familiar words which breathe this spirit :

"Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed :
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious at the awful day !"

And there are other words which might well be the evening prayer of other than the very little children :

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the LORD my soul to keep :
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the LORD my soul to take ;
And this I pray for JESUS' sake."

The travellers of years ago, as they sought to make their way across the Alps through the mountain passes, were often overtaken by the sudden storms of those regions. In hundreds of cases, bewildered by the intricacies of the path, and overborne by the violence of the storm, they were ready to give up their efforts in despair. And did they then, think you, shrink back in terror and alarm if in the distance they saw the gleaming of the Hospice lights, where they knew that shelter and comfort awaited them ? Throughout the journey of life there is many a hill Difficulty to be surmounted, and the pathway is often far from clear. Some there are among you, even of those whose lives are yet far from the boundary of the three-score years and ten, who without being weak or too readily yielding, have yet seemed to have your strength of mind and body taxed almost beyond the power of endurance. What cause is there for terror if, drawing nearer, we can see "Heaven's distant lamps ?"

Often and often you have thought of your friends at sea. When the darkness closed around your own dwelling, and a storm of wind was raging, with a sympathy of affection that stopped not to reason upon commonplace facts, you have supposed that that same storm was exposing them to great perils of waters. Have you felt less calm and less at ease when the morning dawned, and the storm was over? Or when those men "who go down to the sea in ships" are overtaken by a storm, so that the waves seem to "go up to the heavens above and down to the earth beneath," and sails are torn and cordage broken, and the ship upon the waters is as a toy in the hands of a giant, think you they recoil in fear when the wind sinks into a calm, and the waves are still, and they themselves are at "the haven where they would be?"

The ocean of life is not without its storms: sudden gusts of trial come upon us sometimes with awful force: pitiless temptations come sweeping down where we least expect them: we are tossed hither and thither we know scarce how nor where by some overmastering burst of passion! Shrink not from the haven of peace, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest;" where earth's tempestuous waves of temptation and of sin are for ever calmed into eternal peace, as is the crystal sea before the throne of God!

In the older history of the chosen people of God there were Cities of Refuge to which the manslayer might flee who had inadvertently shed his brother's blood. Once within their boundaries he was safe, for inside their walls no hand could be raised in vengeance, nor could the Revenger, as such, ever enter there.

No need for us to do more than remind you of the "great adversary" who is ever pursuing with relentless fury, and who will never altogether cease his efforts to compass

our destruction until the confines of the everlasting Refuge shall be really reached. But into the City of GOD "there shall in no wise enter *anything* that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, nor maketh a lie; but they that are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Even yet many a soul of shrinking, timid faith, may draw back in terror, or at least in doubt, from death. We each one fear, perhaps, not so much the pains of dying, nor the pangs of parting, nor the mortal struggle,—terrible as these may seem; but the guilty memories of the past that like thunder clouds roll dark and thick before the soul, and terrify it with the awful prospect of a coming judgment. What can we do in scenes like these? What, but cling to our Saviour JESUS, and if it be not given us with holy, humble confidence, to utter His dying words, we may, perhaps, by His grace, breathe out our life in such as these:

"JESU, Refuge of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high;
Hide me, O my Saviour! hide,
Till the storm of life be past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!"

"At length the worst is o'er, and Thou art laid
 Deep in Thy darksome bed ;
All still and cold beneath yon dreary stone
 Thy sacred form is gone ;
Around those lips where power and mercy hung,
 The dews of death have clung ;
The dull earth o'er Thee, and Thy foes around,
Thou sleep'st a silent corse, in funeral fetters wound.

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So, buried with our LORD, we'll close our eyes
To the decaying world, till Angels bid us rise."

KEBLE: *Easter Eve.*